

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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O R 221700Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7688
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 1815

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, EC
SUBJECT: GOE DECLARES WAR ON DRUGS

REF: QUITO 1652 (NOTAL)

1. MINGOV JARRIN HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER THE MARCH 21 CABINET MEETING AT WHICH HE PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED THE GOE'S INTENTION TO ENGAGE IN A "WAR ON DRUGS". JARRIN'S STATEMENT RECEIVED PROMINENT, FRONT-PAGE ATTENTION IN QUITO DAILIES ON MARCH 22. BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION JARRIN NOTED THAT DURING 1976 AND 1977 OVER 900 PEOPLE WERE ARRESTED FOR TRAFFICKING IN DRUGS IN ECUADOR BUT THAT A GREAT PERCENTAGE OF THEM HAD BEEN RELEASED, LARGELY BECAUSE THE POLICE REPORT WAS NOT SUFFICIENT, UNDER CURRENT LAW, TO ALLOW CONVICTION. HE ADDED THAT ECUADOR IS NOT A DRUG PRODUCER, BUT THAT IT IS AN IMPORTANT LINK IN THE TRAFFICKING ROUTE FROM BOLIVIA AND PERU TO THE US. HE SAID THAT, IN ADDITION TO FOREIGNERS, THE TRAFFICKERS INCLUDE MANY ECUADOREANS,
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ESPECIALLY BUSINESSMEN WHO HAVE FAILED IN LEGAL UNDERTAKINGS.

2. JARRIN THEN WENT ON TO DETAIL THE MEASURES THE CABINET HAD DECIDED TO UNDERTAKE IN THIS "WAR". QUOTE:
)1 ESTABLISH LEGAL PROCEDURES WHICH PERMIT THE PROSECUTOR GREATER FREEDOM TO OVERSEE AND INTERVENE IN PROCESSING OF DRUG CASES, IN ORDER TO PROMOTE ERRADICATION OF EVIL.

2) ORDER A REVISION OF PROCEDURAL NORMS TO SPEED UP PROCESSING OF CASES AND IMPROVE EFFICIENCY OF JUDICIAL PROCESS. 3) REVISE THE LAW AGAINST NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING TO MAKE IT MORE SEVERE. 4) REINFORCE MATERIALLY AND WITH PERSONNEL THE POLICE DEDICATED TO THE CAMPAIGN OF ERRADICATING USE AND TRAFFIC OF DRUGS; 5) IMPROVE POLICE ACTION, ON A PERMANENT BASIS, TO INSURE THE SUCCESS OF THAT CAMPAIGN. 6) ELIMINATE ELEMENTS CONSIDERED INEFFECTIVE WHICH BELONG TO ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE WAR ON DRUGS. 7) RECOMMEND TO THE JUDICIAL BRANCH THAT IT ACT RAPIDLY, WITH ENERGY, AND EFFECTIVELY IN CASES INVOLVING DRUGS. 8) RECOMMEND TO THE SUPREME COURT THAT IT REOPEN JUDGMENTS IN CASES WHERE PERMITTED BY LAW. 9) REITERATE ECUADOR'S SUPPORT FOR THE DECISIONS ON THE SUBJECT TAKEN AT THE SIXTH INTER-AMERICAN CONGRESS OF ATTORNEYS GENERAL, A FEW MONTHS AGO. 10) PROMOTE THE FORMATION OF A TECHNICAL JUDICIAL POLICE AND UNDERTAKE TO HAVE POLICE REPORTS ACCEPTED AS PROOF IN JUDICIAL PROCESSES. 11) AMEND THE PENAL CODE AND PENAL PROCEDURES TO ACHIEVE THE SAME GOAL. END QUOTE.

3. JARRIN NOTED IN CONCLUSION THAT THE SUPREME COUNCIL HAD APPOINTED COMMITTEES TO EXECUTE THE CABINET DECISIONS AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE. HE NOTED THAT THERE WAS A
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CONSENSUS THAT THE TRAFFIC AND CONSUMPTION OF DRUGS IS
"THE NEW EPIDEMIC IN ECUADOR AND THE WORLD".

4. COMMENT: OBVIOUSLY THE CONVERSATION THAT SENIOR ADVISOR FALCO AND DAS ARELLANO HAD WITH ADMIRAL POVEDA ON MARCH 15 DID NOT FALL ON DEAF EARS. POVEDA PROMISED ACTION AT THE MARCH 21 CABINET MEETING, AND HE CERTAINLY PRODUCED. THE SUB SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT INFORMED THE DEA/SAIC THAT PRACTICALLY THE ENTIRE CABINET SESSION WAS DEDICATED TO NARCOTICS CONTROL. THE LIST OF CABINET MEASURES IS MORE SPECIFIC THAN WE WOULD HAVE EXPECTED AND PUBLICLY COMMITS THE GOE TO A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT STEPS. JARRIN'S ADMISSION THAT MANY OF THE TRAFFICKERS ARE ECUADOREANS EVEN RAISES THE HOPE THAT ACTION WILL BE TAKEN AGAINST THEM, AS DOES THE RECOMMENDATION THAT THE COURTS REOPEN CASES WHERE POSSIBLE. HIS PLEDGE TO ELIMINATE ELEMENTS CONSIDERED INEFFECTIVE THAT BELONG TO ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE WAR MAY BE INTERPRETED AS BEING AIMED AT CORRUPT OFFICIALS. THE FIRST STEP HAS CERTAINLY BEEN POSITIVE; THE EMBASSY WILL MONITOR THE SITUATION VERY CLOSELY TO SEE WHETHER ACTUAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES UP, AND WE WILL SEEK TO COOPERATE WITH THE GOE TO THE MAXIMUM

EXTENT IN MAKING CASES AGAINST MAJOR TRAFFICKERS.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: IN EVENT FALCO IS STILL ENGAGED IN
HEARINGS, REQUEST THIS INFO BE PASSED TO HER ASAP FOR
POSSIBLE USE.

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Message Attributes

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